

#1 *Polit. Pamph. vol. 125,*
A SHORT

ACCOUNT

OF THE LATE

EXPEDITION

TO THE

COAST OF FRANCE, *k*

By One who attended the EXAMINATION at WHITEHALL.

L O N D O N:

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(3)

A SHORT
A C C O U N T
OF THE LATE
E X P E D I T I O N .

AS many Spurious, and I
think very False, Ac-
counts of the Late Expedition
have been sent into the World,

B 2

I think

(4)

I think it will be doing Justice to the Publick, as well as to the Gentlemen concerned in the Conduct of it, to have it stated in its true Light.

And that I may not appear to do it impertinently, I have confined myself to a few short Remarks, every Circumstance of which is faithfully collected, from a strict and most impartial Attention to the Examination lately held before the Board of General Officers. When I say impartial, I must however confess, that I went to that, as I think a Man of

of Humanity must to all Trials, wishing rather to hear Matter of Acquittal than Censure; the more, as I could not conceive how a Set of Gentlemen, who had, during the last War, and in the most trying Actions of it, constantly distinguished themselves, as at Dettingen, Fontenoy, Melde, Culloden, and Laffeldt, should now be so totally changed, as to start at the Approach of Dangers, probably much inferior to those, of which they had before stood the actual Experience, with such remarkable Constancy.

This

This, from the first, gave me a Suspicion, that the Representations we have generally had of this Affair, have been either Maliciously or Negligently made. With these Thoughts, and in this Spirit, I came to the Examination at Whitehall, which was so publick, and to my Apprehension so satisfactory, that I came away convinced, it was impossible to find a Difference of Opinion upon it: at least, as far as the Determination of the First Council of War; to which I shall confine my Observations at present, but the various Opinions I have since heard on that subject,

subject, have made me resolve to put together, as shortly and clearly as I can, the Chief Heads of that Evidence which appeared upon it, and transmit them plainly and faithfully to the Publick.

1st, Then it appeared by the Papers and Examination, particularly those of L. C. Cl—ke and Joseph Thierri the Pilot, that the freshest Intelligence there was relative to the State of Rochfort before the Embarkation of the Troops, was of three Years and an half old: viz in April 1754. when L. C. C---ke was there: the Pilot not having been there for some Years before.

2. That

2dly, That the Coast and Nature of the Landing in the Road of Basques were intirely unknown, as also the Country in the Neighbourhood. The particular State of the Troops and Garrison, &c.

3dly, That the Expedition was sent out on the Footing of a *Coup de Main*, or *Surprize only*.

4thly, That this was plain from the Government's fearing to get any new or better Intelligence, *lest the Secret should be discovered*.

5thly, That the Embarkation
was

was delayed near two Months after the Troops were assembled in the Isle of Wight.

6thly, That during that Time there was undoubted Intelligence received, that the Alarm was already spread along the Coast of France from Brest and St. Malos to Rochelle and Rochfort, particularly by Letters and Advices from Capt. Cleveland and Capt. Proby, ——— by one taken on Board the Emerald a French Man of War and brought into the Fleet: And by many Neutral Vessels from those Parts during the Voyage.

C

7. That

7. That the Fleet first appeared off the Isle of Oleron on the 20th September. That it was the 23d in the Morning before they got in. That the Isle of Aix was taken the same Day. That on the 24th a Plan was given in for attacking the Fort of Fouras by Sea and Land; at the same time making a Diversion on the Side of Rochelle, &c. This Plan was agreeable to the General's own Ideas, and approved by him, but failed doubly by the Declaration of the Sea Officers, *That Fouras could not be attacked by Sea*, and by the Report of the Rear

Rear Admiral and Captains sent to sound and reconnoitre the Coast, *that there was no Landing near Fouras.*

8. That the Report of the said Sea Officers was made on the 24th in the Afternoon, and that the Council of War met next Morning the 25th.

9. That by this Report it appeared they had discovered no other Landing Places but two, both of them near the Point of Chatelaillon, *on the open Road.*

10. That no Man of War
C 2 could

could lie up *within two Miles* of those Places to *assist the Landing* or *secure the Retreat*.

11. That if the Wind came to the West, which was now daily expected, with Blowing Weather, being near the Time of the Equinox, *All Communication with the Fleet would be cut off*. This appears in the Opinion of the First Council of War, signed by the three Admirals and the eldest Captain in the Fleet; and by the Deposition of the ablest Pilot there.

And how important that Article

ticle was thought from the first, appears by a Paper delivered to the General by the present Commander in chief of his Majesty's Forces, containing his Observations upon this Scheme in these Words.

A safe and well secured Communication between the Camp and the Sea, from whence you are to receive your Supplies of all Kinds is absolutely necessary, the whole depends upon it. This Paper was delivered in at the Examination, and certainly did Honour to the Judgment of that Respectable Person.

12. There

12. There were Sand Hills on the shore, at the Place of Landing, said to be equivalent to an Entrenchment, behind which a few Hundred Men doing their Duty, might prevent a Descent of about 1500 or 2000 Men, which was all the Boats could contain at a time, who could not use their Arms, and were unprotected by the Cannon of the Ships.

13. More Troops than were sufficient for that purpose were seen by the Rear Admiral and Captains who went to sound and
re-

reconnoitre the Coast on the 23d and 24th. There was a Battery on the Shore there, but that was not an Obstacle insisted on.

Thus it stood with regard to the Landing. — With Regard to the Attack of the Place it appeared, 1. That the Design being for a Coup de Main, there was not Artillery sufficient for a regular Attack, as the chief Engineer declared at the council of War.

His Words are, *That he does not imagine any regular Attack*
was

was intended against that (Rochfort) or any other Place ; the small Quantity of Artillery we have not being sent on that Plan.

2. As to the State of Rochfort, there was, by the Accounts of Col. C--ke and the Pilot, a large and high Rampart of Earth, round the Place, faced with Stone ; the Ditch was wet from the River Side, each way, for a considerable Part of the Circumference ; but then the Works were, in most Parts, only flanked with Redans ; and there was a Part by the River where the Rampart discontinued, the
Space

Space of 60 Yards, according to the Pilot; or of *a Front*, according to the Engineer ;--who also said the Ditch was imperfect in several Places.

On the other Hand, it appeared by the Engineer's own Account, that this Opening was in the low marshy Ground, by the River Side, and already cut with deep muddy Ditches into which the Tide flowed. As also that a good Entrenchment might be thrown up there in 24, or at most 36 Hours Time: There was already, by the Pilot's Account, a Pallisade there.----And there were five Ships in the River,

D whose

whose Cannon would scour that Part at half Musquet-shot; all which, with the morassy Ground and Ditches, would make that stronger against a Coup de Main or Assault, than any Part of the Rampart.

As to the Rampart, the Height of it was not exactly known, tho' of the utmost Consequence, *the Dependance being on an Escalade*, which C. C--ke laments in his Letter that he omitted; as he imagined it was about 25 Foot high, but, as others said, 30, 'tis probable therefore, that the Ladders, good Part of which were

were but of 25 Feet, would have been too short.

As to the Ditch, it was proved by two positive Witnesses before the Council of War, that it was wet, or could be flowed with Water all round.

Viz. Monf. Bonneville Volunteer declared, *That there are Sluices there, by which they can flow the Ditch, and that it was full of Water all round when he was there.*

The Pilot of the Neptune said,
That he had commanded a small
D 2 *Vessel*

Vessel there many Years, that they have Sluices near the Hospital, by which they can fill the Ditch with Water; that they raise them sometimes to cleanse the Ditch; and that he has seen Water in it quite round the Town.

The chief Engineer also declared, being asked, Whether, *if the Ditch were filled with Water, the Place could be escaladed? That he thought not.*

To this must be added, that though the Ditch could not be flowed all round, the Success
of

of the Escalade was equally desperate.

For first, These Operations are never undertaken but on the Footing of a Surprize, whereas that Idea had been long vanished.

There had been an Alarm on the Coast a great while: It was now the fifth Day since our Fleet had appeared; the Troops could probably not have landed till next Day, and must have taken another, at least, to march up to the Place, being 10 or 12 Miles, which would make seven
Days

Days from the Time the Fleet had been actually seen on this Coast.

2dly, The Garrison was not exactly known, but must have been very considerable; there were, at least, some regular Battalions; there are Marines always there (when C. C--ke was there, in Time of Peace, there were 1000) there is a Burgher's Guard always mounted, and there are great Numbers of Men in the Place used to Arms.

The Dock-men are very numerous, and the Crews of the Ships

Ships alone, then in the River, if compleat, amounted to near 3000 Men, besides either Troops or Militia of the Country that could be thrown in : Whereas our Army for the Attack was only 10 Battalions, consisting of 7,494 fighting Men, according to the Embarkation Return, including 186 Sick.

And, 3dly, The Nights were light as Day, so that both our March and all our Motions must be discovered by the Enemy.

To which I must add one Circumstance I had omitted,
flew-

shewing, beyond Doubt, that actual Preparations were for some Time making there. This is the Postscript of a Letter found in the Priest's House when the Isle of Aix was taken, and is as follows.

Dated from Rochfort, 18 Sept.
1757.

La saison est trop avancée pour que les Enemis entreprennent quelque chose sur nos Côtes, mais les Precautions de Mons. notre Gouverneur n'en sont pas Moins Bonnes. —

In English— The Season is too far advanced for the Enemy to undertake any Thing on our Coast: but the Precautions our Governor takes are not less Good.

Thus it stood with Regard to the Surprize of Rochfort, the Question before the Council of War being, Whether a Landing should be made, which could be for that Purpose only, and with that Prospect of success, while neither the Communication with the Ships, nor the Retreat of the Troops were in any Way provided for; but if that were impracticable, as well as the regular Attack,

E which

which has been shewn; neither was it more practicable to destroy the Docks, Magazines, Arsenals, &c. our Mortars and Artillery being quite insufficient for that Purpose, as the chief Engineer declared before the Board of General Officers; where, being asked by the President, Whether if *Rochfort* had been found too strong to be taken by a *Coup de Main*, you could not have destroyed the Magazines and Store-houses? He says,

To do it in any tolerable Degree would require five times the Number of Mortars we had with

us, and such a Method would both take up Time, and there would likewise be great Difficulties in bringing up sufficient Stores for that Purpose to the Place, the Distance by Land from Chate-laillon to Rochfort being reckoned 10 or 12 Miles.

From this short State of Facts, I have shewn, I think, that the several following Propositions are undeniable, as connected with the direct March to Rochfort from Chatelaillon, which was the only Question then before the Council (that of Fouras and the Forts having at that Time

been laid aside, for the Reasons above mentioned.) viz.

1st, That the Attack of Rochfort by Escalade was quite hopeless,

2d, That it was impossible to surprize it,

3d, That there was not Artillery to attack it in Form.

4. That it was equally impracticable, without taking it, to destroy the Docks or Magazines.

And, 5th, That the Retreat
of

of the Troops was no Way secured.

From whence I think it will plainly appear where the Failure of the Expedition did not ly, namely in the Resolution of the Council of War of the 25th of September, unanimously, and I think wisely made by all the superior Officers, of both the Land and Sea Service,

Where it did ly, whether in any Defect of the Plan, which I am not willing to suppose, or in such unforeseen, and perhaps unavoidable Circumstances as
have

have defeated all our Expeditions to the Coast of France, I will not determine.---

I shall not enter now into the Consideration of the Things proposed, and debated after this in the several Meetings of the Generals and Admirals, my View being, in this short Sketch, to set the World right in regard to the first steps taken, and to the Opinion of the first Council of War. —

When the subsequent Transactions come, at a proper Time, to be cleared up, I am persuaded
there

there will not be less Reason, with respect to them, also to think well both of the Judgment and Intentions of those to whom his Majesty committed the Conduct of the late Expedition: I reserve this for a second Part, if my honest Pains to discover Truth by a simple deduction of Facts, shall be thought worthy the Attention of the Publick.

F I N I S.

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